From the Island to the World
People and Place on a Scottish island

THE GREAT BOOK OF SKYE

Norman Macdonald and Cailean Maclean
MacAlister, Sir Donald
7 May 1854 – 15 January 1934
Physician, scholar and university Principal

In Perth and lived successively in Glasgow, Perth, Aberdeen, and Liverpool following the work of his father who was a publisher’s agent. c of Donald MacAlister and Euphemia née Kennedy (d. 1905), second daughter of Daniel MacAlister and Euphemia née Kennedy (d. 1905), second daughter of Angus Kennedy, of Bowmore, Islay. On 19 March 1895, Donald MacAlister married a distant relative, Edith Florence Boyle Macalister (1873–1950), daughter of Alexander Macalister (1844–1919), professor of anatomy at Cambridge. University Donald Macalister (this entry) was Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Glasgow University, 1907-29; Chancellor, 1929-34. K.C.B., 1908; created Baronet, 1924. His family came originally from Strath, Skye and he often told how the two boys whom Sir Walter Scott met on the shores of Loch Slapin in August 1814 were his ancestor’s cousins. He told the Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club in 1910 of how, in Strath, Scott “invaded the territory of (his) relative, Alexander MacAlister of Strathaird, and without the laird’s leave scrambled into the celebrated stalactite cave on Loch Slapin. Scott told of how the party had carried off two of Mr MacAlister’s grandsons, whom he praised as, ‘remarkably fine boys’ ”. The Principal of Glasgow University then told of how he had heard from his “seniors in Tarbert” (on Loch Fyne where his family were, for a time, settled) that they “reckoned them among their cousins (and) that their adventure with Sir Walter was often retold as a family tradition to be proud of”. The tradition clearly owes its source to Scott’s descriptions of Spar Cave, Strath, in “Imagination can hardly conceive anything more beautiful than the extraordinary grotto discovered not many years since upon the estate of Alexander MacAlister, Esq., of Strathaird”, and the famous words in Canto III of The Lord of the Isles, stanza XXVIII, with the lines: “And mermaid’s alabaster grot, Who bathes her limbs in sunless well Deep in Strathaird’s enchanted cell.” Until at least the mid-twentieth century, Strath mothers still told their children how Scott and his party entertained the MacAlister boys by firing their ship’s guns, after ensuring their friendship by handing them almonds and raisins. Alexander MacAlister (1744-1832) of Strathaird was the eldest son of Ranald MacAlister of “Treslane”, Skirinish, who had been Factor for the MacDonalds of Trotternish. Through his marriage to Mary Campbell of Ederline, he had a daughter Janet who married Dr. Duncan MacAlister of Tarbert, their marriage apparently giving Sir Donald MacAlister (this entry) his link with the Strathaird line as his descent was also through the family of Dr. Duncan MacAlister. Alexander MacAlister (1744-1832) farmed at Glasnakille Farm, near Elgol, buying the Strathaird Estate in 1789 and he and his wife Janet are both buried in the MacAlister Tomb at Drinan, Strath, Skye. To begin a study of the MacAlister family’s relationship to the major Skye families of Ord and Sleat see the entry of Lieut Charles MacDonald (1777-1867). Sir Donald MacAlister had a life-long interest in Gaelic promotion and attracted attention when, as the newly-appointed Principal of Glasgow University, he spoke at the opening of An Comunn Gaidhealach’s Bazaar in Glasgow saying “To many thousands of our countrymen Gaelic performed a service that English could never render. English stood for bread-winning, for the market, and the workshop, and so it was needful; but it dealt only with the prose of life, while Gaelic mediated the poetry without which life was hardly worth living.” Addressing the Gaelic Society of Glasgow two months later, he outlined Glagow
MacCaskill, Katie
19 October 1868 - 12 September 1909
Bearer of her family’s history of the Titanic
b Eynort, Minginish. dau of William Watson, shepherd and Margaret née Ross. m Archibald MacCaskill at the Manse of Bracadale on 4 January 1892. sis of Titanic victims Margaret Ann Ford (qv) and Eliza Johnston (qv). Her descendants, through her son Donald MacCaskill (22 July 1903-2 March 1969), keep the Watson family connection in the Carbost area. An outline study of her family is included in Norman Macdonald, Sky’s Path, Glenbrittle Girls Drown, a Paper delivered before Portree Local History Society on 9 October 2012, to mark the centenary year of the Titanic tragedy, available at Skye and Lochalsh Archives, Portree.

MacCowan, Rev Roderick
8 February 1871 - 11 September 1948
Clergyman and author
b at Camustianivaig. s of Donald MacCowan, fisherman, and Christina née Campbell (d 29 January 1915), who married 24 January 1861 at Snizort. Free Church minister at Kiltarlity. His father, Donald MacCowan, was the first person on whose surname for non-payment of rent were served when H.M.S Jackal, carrying military and legal officers including Sheriff William Ivory (qv) and fifteen marines, sailed in to Camustianavaig Bay on 15 October 1886. He told the officers that it was not easy for him to pay as there was no fishing and he had eleven of a family. His croft, he told them, was five acres and it was the same size since he got a more of food from it and that he had worked for twenty years at the east coast fishing. In his application to the Crofters’ Commission in 1887, he stated that he had 12 of a family and his income from the Camustianavaig “common sheep stock” had, in the previous year, been £5. Rev Roderick MacCowan was a strong and active supporter of the crofters’ cause during the land raids of the early 1920s and, in 1923, raised money for those jailed in Edinburgh. His status as a respected Skye native earned him an invitation to join the platform party at the opening of the Margaret Carnegie Hostel in Portree in September 1924. Published by John MacLaine (qv), Portree in 1902; Reviewed in Scotsman, November 1902, p. 2. 2. Published by John MacLaine (qv), Portree in 1924; Reviewed in Scotsman, November 1924, p. 2. 3. A detailed list appeared in Scotsman, 29 June 1949, p. 2.

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which was out of print”, in his bookshop when visiting a copy of Leabhar na Feinne (qv) wrote of how she got inspiration from buying “an old and new, to Gaels throughout the world. Frances Tolmie entered the book trade in 1877 with business premises at 9 Warrender Park Terrace, Edinburgh. Norman Macleod Flora Macleod lived initially at 9 St Giles Street and latterly in Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. Norman and Edinburgh. In 1883, Bonar was Moderator of the General Marriage ceremony conducted by Rev Horatius Bonar Flora MacDiarmid in Edinburgh on 18 December 1883. Macdonald, Carradale, Sleat. m to Margaret Macleod, daughter of Alexander Macleod, shoemaker and Ann (Norman Macleod, Sr., of Carradale, died 10 September, 1852; Margaret Macleod, née (Norman Macleod, Sr., of Carradale, died 10 September, 1852) was the mother of Roderick Macleod (1821-3 October 1897 qv), known as Ruaraidh na Tì, one of Britain's most esteemed bards, Dòmhnall nan Oran was his great grandfather. The famous tea importer's great uncle; Roderick Macleod, Tea Merchant, was his great grandfather's first cousin. The famous tea importer's great grandmother, Margaret Macleod is a very good example of the continuum in Skye and one of the largest in the Highlands. Employing around 480 men the company was, by far, the largest local private business ever to have operated on the island's top businessman of the 20th century was, thereby, Macleod who married MacSween. Grandson of Norman Macleod, Rev Norman MacLeod reference in James Campbell, 1902-2000, entry, qv). Buried in Sronuirinish Cemetery, Portree. 2 e.g. The Malt Whisky Gardiner Chair of Biochemistry at The University of Edinburgh from 1978 to 1982. N. Macleod and Co. Ltd, Building and Civil Engineering Contractors, founded in 1958 and based at Portree, was the mother of Roderick Macleod (1821-3 October 1897 qv), known as Ruaraidh na Tì, one of Britain's most esteemed bards, Dòmhnall nan Oran was his great grandfather. The famous tea importer's great uncle; Roderick Macleod, Tea Merchant, was his great grandfather's first cousin. The famous tea importer's great grandmother, Margaret Macleod is a very good example of the continuum in Skye and one of the largest in the Highlands. Employing around 480 men the company was, by far, the largest local private business ever to have operated on the island's top businessman of the 20th century was, thereby, Macleod who married MacSween. Grandson of Norman Macleod, Rev Norman MacLeod reference in James Campbell, 1902-2000, entry, qv). Buried in Sronuirinish Cemetery, Portree. 2 e.g. The Malt Whisky
McPhee, Sir John Cameron

KCMG
4 July 1878 - 14 September 1952
Premier of Tasmania, Businessman
b at Yan Yean, Victoria s of Donald McPhee, storekeeper from Skye, and his Victorian-born wife Elizabeth, née McLaughlin. m Alice Bealey Crompton née Dean. educ at state schools until age fourteen and after a time on the family farm was apprenticed to a printer. Worked on a Bairnsdale newspaper, reporting, advertising and typesetting, thereafter as a compositor in the Government Printing Office, Melbourne. Moved to Hobart, Tasmania in 1908, where he ran a business college for a number of years. Developed a stationery and business equipment company (J. C. McPhee Pty Ltd), was co-proprietor of the Huon Times newspaper, and the director of several Tasmanian companies. At one time, trained for the Presbyterian ministry, and remained a keen temperance worker. First elected to represent the Nationalist Party of Australia in the Tasmanian House of Assembly in 1919; subsequently elected Party Leader and was elected Premier on 15 June 1928, winning a landslide victory in 1931 but, for health reasons, did not stand in 1934. Knighted in June 1934.

Menzies, Sheriff Tom Alexander

LL.B
1877 - 9 December 1950
Lawyer and Skye Sheriff
b Hull, England s of John Menzies, art master, and Maria née Menzies, who was born in Bowmore, Islay. educ Robert Gordon’s College and graduated LL.B at Edinburgh University. Called to the Bar in 1904. Succeeded Sheriff Valentine (qv) as Sheriff at Portree in April 1925 and was in post until leaving for Oban in July 1929. During a period of Sheriff Menzies’ illness from November 1927, Major Norman Macdonald, grandson of Lord Kingsburgh (Sir John Hay Athole Macdonald, qv), acted as Interim Sheriff Substitute at Portree. Sheriff Tom Menzies was succeeded as Sheriff at Portree by William Ross Garson (qv). On leaving Portree, was Sheriff at Oban and Ayr. A skilled violinist, he adjudicated at the Skye Provincial Mods, such as that of August 1928 in Portree. Known for his knowledge of fish and birds. Served in Royal Garrison Artillery in WW1 and the Hong Kong and Singapore RGA. Member of Prestwick Golf Club and Scottish Conservative Club, Edinburgh. Reported for Scottish Law Reporter, and, latterly, for Scots Law Times. Unmarried. Lived latterly at 70 Comiston Road, Edinburgh.

Moir, Duncan Macmillan

MBE
18 March 1913 - 26 May 2008
Maritime Engineer Officer. Battle of the Atlantic hero. Awarded Lloyd’s War Medal for outstanding gallantry and bravery at sea in September 1944. Hospital engineer b at Peinachorrain, Braes s of John Moir, police officer, and Kate née MacMillan who married 23 March 1917. m to Margaret Rea Maclean. The Lloyd’s War Medal award is awarded for members of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleet for “exceptional gallantry” at sea in time of war. With two shipmates, Edwin James Stormont from Glasgow and John McKechnie from Condorrat, Dumbartonshire, Moir featured in a major life-saving exercise when their ship, the armed merchant cruiser, SS California, sailing in convoy, was severely damaged and set on fire by enemy aircraft, on 11 July 1943. As part of Convoy Rath, a small, fast Allied convoy of July 1943, the two troopships, SS California and SS Duchess of York, both former liners, were carrying military personnel to West Africa, where locally-recruited troops were to be embarked as reinforcements for the Allied forces in Burma and the Middle East. They were being escorted by the destroyer HMS Douglas and the frigate HMS Myall, and sailed from Port Glasgow, on 8 July 1943 bound for Freetown, Sierra Leone. On 11 July 1943, when about 340 miles west of Vigo, Spain, the...
Douglas, Katherine Ann (Catriona)

28 June 1895–31 August 1966. Singer and tradition bearer. This is one of the earliest versions of a love song which has variants in many districts, some being from the male point of view and some from the female.

Mo chridhe trom 's duilich leam,
'S muladach a tha mi,
Bho 'n chuir mo leannan cùlthaobh rium,
T e ùr cha teid 'na h-àite.

Marbhphaisg air a' ghòraiche,
Gur fhada beò gun bhàs i;
Gu'n shaoileam rinn mi teicheadh bhuaith
'Nuair ghabh mi 'm chead 's a' Bhàgh dhith.

My heart is heavy and I am sorrowful,
Despondent am I,
Since my sweetheart deserted me,
A new one will not take her place.

A death-shroud on the stupidity,
Long life without death she may have;
I'd thought that I had escaped from it
When I had my will with her in Bay.


MacCruimein, Padruig Mòr

1595–1670. Piper to the MacLeods of Dunvegan. He was a legend during his lifetime, and his name continues to be used regularly in piping circles. He was praised in the Gaelic verses of Mary Nighinn Alasdair Ruaidh (Mary MacLeod, 1615-1706) notably in Crònan an Taibh;

Ach pìob nuallanach mhór
Bheireadh buaidh air gach ceòl,
An uair a gluaiste i le meoir Phàdraig.

But the great shrill-voiced pipe,
All music surpassing
When Patrick's fingers stirred it.

(J. Carmichael Watson, ed., Gaelic Songs of Mary MacLeod, 1934, pp. 44–45).

MacInnes, Joan

24 March 1907–25 September 1992. Song collector and teacher. The songs collected in her home area of Breakish and Broadford by a Portree schoolgirl in 1926, have since become well-known. She became a schoolteacher and was married to a headteacher of Broadford School, John MacSween. One song in particular, Cruinneag Na Buaile, has become popular in Nova Scotia with its attractive refrain:

O Chruinneag, 's tu chruinneag
O chruinneag na buaile;
'O chruinneag mo chridhe,
'S ann leat a ruithinn air fuadach.

Oh young woman
Young woman of the fold
Young woman of my heart
I would run with you.

(An Gaidheal, Vol. 23, No. 4, January 1928, p. 58).

Mackinnon, Lachlan

1665–1734. Bard of Charles Mackinnon of Caunn, Ullin, and Mary nee Macleod, daughter of John Mackinnon of Drynoch. Of Skye bards who were composing in the 17th century, he is the best-remembered today.

The best-known of his compositions are Latha Siobhal Sleibhe, a poem in praise of three qualities, Iochd, a's Gràdh, a's Fiughantas (Generosity, Love, and Liberality) which he imagined meeting in the form of young people in a lonely spot as he walked to the hill.

Latha sidheal dubh sleibhe,
S nu faithleil faoi gach ait,
A cheilidh eise an t-àite a' cheilidh
Gach cheann cein air a chuosach a' cheilidh.

I would run with you
Young women of the fold
Young women of my heart
I would run with you.

(An Gaidheal, Vol. 15, No. 4, January 1928, p. 58).